

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

From: Kasey McCulloch, Media Officer, Mercy Health

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'Thunderstorm asthma' keeps emergency staff busy

Werribee Mercy Hospital's Emergency Department has treated an influx of patients experiencing weather-related respiratory issues over the past 24 hours.

Strong winds and storms across Melbourne triggered a mass incident of what is known as 'thunderstorm asthma'. Thunderstorm asthma can occur quickly and includes shortness of breath, chest tightness, coughing and wheezing.

Health Services – Chief Executive Linda Mellors said Werribee Mercy Hospital received 185 presentations to the Emergency Department during the 24 hours to midnight last night, and a further 73 presentations from midnight to 7.30am today. There were 32 admissions to the Short Stay Unit.

"In a typical 24-hour period we see 100-120 emergency presentations," Dr Mellors explained.

"Our emergency nurses and doctors did an amazing job treating patients in a timely manner. At one point, patients were lined up outside the hospital.

"We had extra staff come in from home and others stay back late to ensure we had all hands on deck to deal with the huge number of people needing medical assistance."

Pharmacies across Werribee dropped off extra Ventolin to the hospital after supplies ran low and emergency staff worked with ambulance officers to unload patients as quickly as possible.

"Last night was testament to what we can achieve as a team. I commend everyone for their hard work and patience during the past 24 hours, including our patients," Dr Mellors said.

High demand for Emergency Department services was expected to continue this morning.

– Ends –

For interviews and photo opportunities, please contact:

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